

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

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AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

AMCONSUL LUANDA

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

USMISSION NATO

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

DIA WASHDC

CINCLANT NORFOLK VA

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

USNMR SHAPE BRUSSELS BEL

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 906

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PO

SUBJ: SOCIALISTS COMMENT ON POLITICAL SITUATION

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1. AT MEETING FEB. 16 WITH LUKENS AND MYSELF, JORGE CAMPINOS,

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND CUNHA REGO, CHIEF OF CABINET TO SOARES, GAVE US AN ASSESSMENT OF LOCAL POLITICAL SITUATION FROM SOCIALISTS POINT OF VIEW. THESE ARE THE TWO CLOSEST PEOPLE TO SOARES AND CAN BE ASSUMED TO REPRESENT HIS VIEWPOINT. IT PARTICULARLY NOTEWORTHY THAT CUNHA REGO, PERHAPS THE MOST PESSIMISTIC OF LOCAL OBSERVERS, SHARED CAMPINOS' ANALYSIS, NOTING, HOWEVER, THAT HIS PESSIMISM HAD BEEN JUSTIFIED THREE WEEKS AGO EVEN IF IT WASN'T JUSTIFIED NOW.

2. CAMPINOS ATTACHED GREAT IMPORTANCE TO TWO EVENTS: THE MEETINGS OF THE AFM ON "INSTITUTIONALIZATION" AND COSTA GOMES SPEECH. A REAL STRUGGLE WAS GOING ON WITHIN THE AFM, HE SAID, OVER HOW THE MOVEMENT WILL FORMALIZE ITSELF. A NUMBER OF PROPOSALS HAD BEEN INTRODUCED, SOME QUITE RADICAL. BUT IN A CRUCIAL MEETING ON SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15, THE MODERATE ELEMENT WON A DECISIVE VICTORY. THIS WAS THE SAME ELEMENT THAT HAD EMERGED VICTORIOUS IN THE STRUGGLE OVER WHETHER ELECTIONS WOULD TAKE PLACE. CAMPINOS WAS CONFIDENT A "MODERATE INSTITUTIONALIZATION" PROGRAM WOULD EMERGE AND THAT THIS REPRESENTED A REAL SETBACK FOR THE COMMUNISTS.

3. IN CAMPINOS' VIEW COSTA GOMES AND THE MODERATES HAD ESTABLISHED THEMSELVES WITH COSTA GOMES FEBRUARY 10 SPEECH (LISBON 793 AND 801). THE MAIN THRUST OF THE SPEECH WAS AGAINST THE LEFT. IN PARTICULAR, HE SAID, IT WAS DIRECTED AGAINST PM VASCO GONCALVES. (HE ATTACHED IMPORTANCE TO FACT THAT SPEECH WAS ORIGINALLY TO HAVE BEEN GIVEN BY VASCO GONCALVES.) IN HIS VIEW, IF COSTA GOMES WERE TO RUN FOR ELECTION NOW, THE SOCIALISTS, THE PPD AND EVEN THE COMMUNISTS WOULD BE OBLIGED TO SUPPORT HIM.

4. CAMPINOS AND CUNHA REGO THOUGHT COMMUNIST REACTION TO THEIR SETBACK OF PAST TWO WEEKS WOULD BE TO STEP UP THEIR OBSTRUCTIONIST CAMPAIGN ON ECONOMIC FRONT. WORKERS HAD ALREADY OCCUPIED A LARGE NUMBER OF PLANTS. COMMUNISTS COULD CONTINUE TO TALK MODERATION WHILE CLANDESTINELY PROVOKING STRIKES, WITH OBJECT OF FORCING MILITARY INTERVENTION AND EVENTUAL EMERGENCE OF MILITARY DICTATORSHIP. THEY DID NOT THINK COMMUNISTS WOULD RESORT TO STREET VIOLENCE, NOR DID THEY ATTACH MUCH CREDENCE TO THE POSSIBILITY OF A LEFTIST
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MILITARY TAKEOVER.

5. THE MOST IMMEDIATE DANGER, THEY SAID, WAS THAT FAR RIGHT WOULD TRY A COUP. THIS WOULD BE THE GREATEST POSSIBLE MISTAKE, SINCE IT WOULD PULL TOGETHER ALL THE LEFTIST FORCES (BY IMPLICATION THE SOCIALISTS AND THE COMMUNISTS). CUNHA REGO SAID HE HAD SPENT ALL WEEKEND WITH RIGHTIST MILITARY TRYING TO "OPEN THEIR EYES" TO FOLLY OF THE ACTION THEY WERE

CONTEMPLATING. (FYI: AS DEPARTMENT AWARE FROM REPORTING THROUGH OTHER CHANNELS THERE WAS A POSSIBILITY OF A RIGHTIST MOVE LAST WEEKEND.)

6. CAMPINOS AND CUNHA REGO WERE OPTIMISTIC ON ELECTIONS. THEY SAW RECENT SOCIALIST RALLY (LISBON 898) AS GREAT SUCCESS AND WERE NOW PREPARED TO DEAL WITH THE COMMUNISTS ON A TIT FOR TAT BASIS. THEIR OVERALL VIEW WAS THAT SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE BUT THE BATTLE WAS FAR FROM FINISHED.

7. COMMENT: THE SOCIALISTS HERE BLOW HOT AND COLD ON POLITICAL SITUATION, BUT THIS IS BY FAR MOST OPTIMISTIC PICTURE WE HAVE RECEIVED FROM RESPONSIBLE SOCIALIST LEADERS. WHILE WE HAVE NO REASON TO BE SANGUINE ABOUT POLITICAL SITUATION HERE I AM INCLINED TO AGREE WITH THEM THAT EVENTS HAVE TAKEN A TURN FOR THE BETTER IN PAST TWO WEEKS. GOP'S STRONG DEFENSE OF NATO EXERCISE AND PRESIDENT'S SPEECH WERE CLEAR SETBACKS FOR COMMUNISTS. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE HEARD SIMILAR REPORTS ABOUT RECENT EVENTS FROM OTHERS, I WOULD TEND TO BE MORE CAUTIOUS THAN CAMPINOS ON WHETHER MODERATES HAVE YET WON STRUGGLE ON THE KEY ISSUE OF INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF ROLE OF AFM.
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